AN INTERIM REPORT
OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA
FOREST RESOURCES COMMISSION

July, 1990

INTRODUCTION

Arising from the more than 1700 submissions the Commission received and reinforced by the round of public meetings the Commission engaged in this past spring, four issues emerged that, in the view of the Commission, can and should be addressed now and not have to wait until the major recommendations are submitted early next year. These issues have to do with the availability and compatibility of inventory information relating to all forest values; the need for the formal education systems of this Province to address better the importance of natural resources to the Province and the processes used to obtain those resources; the adequacy of public input into forest resource planning and management, particularly as they relate to T.S.A. Committees; and the serious uncertainty affecting forest land use decisions resulting from the land claim issue.

The Commission recognizes that by commenting on these issues in advance of its major recommendations to government, it may be seen by some as taking certain issues out of context. The Commission believes, however, that a variety of factors provide strong reasons for putting certain specific recommendations or comments forward at this time. In doing so, the Commission believes that the government can reasonably take some specific action now and that these actions, albeit small, should provide at least a start to improving forest resource management in British Columbia.

INVENTORIES OF FOREST VALUES

The Commission found, through written submissions, public meetings and detailed interviews with provincial government ministries, that good inventory information pertaining to the full range of forest values and to the capacity of the forest land base to support those values is seriously inadequate. The Commission also found that where inventory information does exist in one ministry, it is often not compatible with inventories developed in other ministries for other purposes. The result is that decision makers and the public have a very inadequate and imperfect information base on which to base decisions or debate.

The result of not knowing, in an adequate way, what values are inherent on specific areas of our forest lands, is predictable. Long-term decisions are often made in the absence of good knowledge of all the forest values being impacted on or with little regard for values other than the specific one being managed for. Further, the public is often confused and subject to being given conflicting and sometimes false statements as to what values may or may not be on any given land base or what the impact on those values may be by any given management practice.

The Commission believes that significantly greater effort will have to be spent to address inadequacies in the inventory information base in a number of areas. Given that the exact nature and extent of inventory information will depend, in large measure, on the forest management processes proposed and adopted, the Commission will address this issue in greater depth as part of its

major recommendations.

Of immediate concern, however, is the lack of standardized inventory information and, therefore, a lack of compatibility of the inventory information presently collected and processed by provincial government ministries. The Commission has identified at least ten ministries that currently hold inventory information relating to specific forest values or to the forest land base. These are:

1. Agriculture and Fisheries
2. Crown Lands
3. Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources
4. Environment
5. Forests
6. Municipal Affairs, Recreation and Culture
7. Native Affairs
8. Parks
9. Tourism
10. Transportation and Highways

These inventories have generally been developed to meet some historical, ministry-specific need and, in many cases, have been developed without regard for their compatibility or relationship to inventories of other forest values. The Commission believes that better and more compatible information about all forest values must be made available if more informed and reasoned debate is to occur. This is particularly important in areas where more than one forest value is to be part of a forest land base decision.

Accordingly, the Commission recommends that:

> **The government immediately examine and implement ways by which the full range of forest related inventories can be made standard and able to be used on compatible systems while, at the same time, retaining the values for which they were originally intended.**

EDUCATION

Throughout all of its investigations to date, the Commission has become increasingly aware and concerned at the woeful lack of understanding of the importance of the resource industries to British Columbia, and of the practices that are carried out in managing those resources. This is particularly true of our forests and of forestry practices. Time after time, the Commission has found that public perceptions are significantly at odds with the actual facts of a given situation. The Commission is also aware that in many a debate and often in decision making, perception is reality and the current gap between the two is, the Commission believes, creating a serious, if not dangerous, situation in British Columbia.

Again, the Commission will have more to say on the subject of education when it submits its main recommendations. However,the Commission did note that the public school system is currently undergoing major reform in the Province and as part of that reform, the curriculum is undergoing significant revision. Since the purpose of the British Columbia school system, as stated in the

School Act, is:

> *"To enable learners to develop their individual potential and acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy,"*

the Commission believes that greater emphasis is needed in the curriculum throughout the primary, intermediate and graduation years on the overall importance of the resource industries, particularly the forests, to the social structure and to the economy of the Province. The Commission believes that the educated public of this Province should understand the importance of our forest industries in shaping the Province, in maintaining certain communities, in providing for services such as health and education, and generally in helping to maintain a lifestyle unequalled in most areas of the world. The public should also have a better understanding of forest practices, why they are used and what their effects are. Accordingly, the Commission recommends that:

> **The Ministry of Education be directed to include significant information about the importance of the resource industries to the Province of British Columbia, particularly the forest resource, and also to include accurate, balanced material about forest management practices at all levels of the curriculum.**

TIMBER SUPPLY AREA STEERING COMMITTEES

During the conduct of its business, the Commission heard repeatedly that Timber Supply Area Steering Committees (T.S.A. Committees) were generally not working well. In submissions and public testimony, the public cited lack of management commitment and lack of adequate balance from interest groups, other than the Ministries of Forests and Environment and the licensees, as being at the heart of the problem. While being openly critical of the current structure and public access to T.S.A. Committees, the public generally felt that the concept was a reasonable one and could be improved upon with relative ease. This was particularly true where T.S.A. and Forest District boundaries were the same.

While the Commission intends to address the whole area of public participation in the planning and management of B.C.'s forest lands in its full report, it believes that the Ministry of Forests can and should take immediate action to improve the workings of the existing T.S.A. Committee structure. Accordingly, the Commission recommends that:

The Ministry of Forests should re-examine the purpose, and makeup of and commitment to its Timber Supply Area Steering Committees with a view to making these more effective.

LAND CLAIMS

In every region of the Province and from individuals and groups across the whole spectrum of society, the Commission heard concern over the land claims issue and the strong desire that it be resolved. In commenting on this matter, the Commission is fully aware that the issue of land claims is not part of its mandate. However, because the concern is so widespread, the Commission believes it has a responsibility to pass the concerns it heard through to the government.

First and foremost, the Commission found that the land claims issue is creating a high degree of uncertainty over the Crown lands of the Province. As most of these are provincial forest, the outstanding land claims issue is affecting forest practices. Forest companies, for example, are thinking twice about investments that have long pay-back periods. This is particularly true of investments in silviculture. Communities are concerned that their stability may be threatened and workers are concerned that their jobs and economic well-being may be threatened.

While expressing almost unanimous concern, groups and individuals across the Province do not appear to be comfortable with using the courts as a means of settling the issue. The overwhelming view of British Columbians, from whom the Commission heard, is that they want the land claims issue settled as soon as possible and they want it accomplished by negotiation among the parties directly involved: namely, the aboriginal people and the federal and provincial governments.

Province of British Columbia

NEWS RELEASE

MINISTRY OF FORESTS
HON. CLAUDE RICHMOND, MINISTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

1990:114

August 27, 1990

MINISTER RELEASES INTERIM REPORT OF FOREST RESOURCES COMMISSION

VICTORIA -- Forests Minister Claude Richmond today released an Interim Report of the British Columbia Forest Resources Commission.

"The commission has been charged with reviewing a number of very complex issues and I am pleased that they have been able to provide this interim report and recommendations," said Richmond. "These are matters that the government can begin to address immediately."

Based on more than 1,700 submissions and public meetings throughout the province, the commission recommends that four issues be addressed immediately, rather than delaying until its major recommendations are submitted early next year.

The report makes three specific recommendations:

- that the government immediately examine and implement ways to standardize forest-related inventories used by different ministries;
- that the Ministry of Education include, at all levels of the curriculum, significant information about the importance of resource industries to the province, particularly the forest resource; and,
- that the Ministry of Forests re-examine the purpose, the membership of, and its commitment to, timber supply area steering committees, with a view to making these more effective.

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"I have directed Ministry of Forests staff to take immediate action to develop a plan, in consultation with other ministries, to increase compatibility between inventory systems currently in use," said Richmond.

The report states the commission is "concerned at the woeful lack of understanding of the importance of the resource industries to British Columbia."

"Time after time, the commission has found that public perceptions are significantly at odds with the actual facts of a given situation," states the report.

"We must continue to work hard to provide accurate information to the public and to incorporate forestry information into our education system," Richmond said.

Richmond also said the commission's recommendation to review the structure of timber supply area steering committees confirms plans already underway.

"We are already implementing changes to broaden participation in these committees and we will be accelerating these changes to address the commission's specific recommendation."

While the commission acknowledges that native land claims are not part of its mandate, the report also addresses this fourth issue.

The report states that people are not comfortable with using the courts as a means of settling native land claims.

"The overwhelming view of British Columbians, from whom the commission heard, is that they want the land claims issue settled as soon as possible and they want it accomplished by negotiation among the parties directly involved: namely, the aboriginal people and the federal and provincial governments," the report states.

"This is consistent with what the government has been hearing from other sources and supports the government's stated position to begin negotiations," Richmond said.

Richmond added that the interim report addresses only a few of the issues before the commission.

"A full and detailed report with policy recommendations on the future of our forests is expected early in the new year, following a series of workshops the commission plans for this fall," he said.

The 12-member permanent commission was established in mid-1989 to independently review and make recommendations on forestry issues. It has been assigned four priorities:

- reviewing the full range of forest values, how forests may be managed to protect and enhance those values, and the total economic impact of the forests on the province;
- advising the Minister of Forests on the effectiveness of tree farm licences as a form of tenure;
- recommending ways to improve public participation in forest planning and management; and,
- reviewing and recommending ways to improve forest harvest practices, focussing on clear-cutting and its associated forest practices and their impacts.

The commission reports to the Minister of Forests and Richmond has said all reports will become public documents.

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